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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the uses and usefulness of prison literacy and vocational education programs to the 65,000 inmates of federal prisons. Data were collected in two ways: (1) a survey of prison staff and review of selected inmate case files and other data to determine if the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) had reliable overall information on inmate participation in these programs; and (2) a survey of federal prisoners and prison staff on incentives for encouraging inmate participation and on the usefulness of BOP's vocational training and industry work assignments in providing marketable skills. Some of the results of the study were the following: (1) staff comments and review of documents showed that the BOP's Education Data System was not very accurate--although it could provide information on overall trends, it often contained erroneous data on individual prisoner's participation in and completion of education programs; (2) inmates reported that they were more inclined to participate in programs when they saw clear opportunities to improve their capabilities and postrelease success, whereas staff usually considered prisoners to be motivated more by current incentives involving cash awards and other tangible benefits for participation; (3) staff and inmates favored some incentives that BOP could arrange, such as security classification reductions, preferred housing assignments, attending school during the workday rather than during free time, and being paid the starting wage for inmate work for attending class; (4) more than half the inmates thought their vocational training would be useful in providing them with marketable skills, and one-third thought their prison jobs would be helpful; and (5) exprisoners who participated in employment and vocational education programs in prison had a better chance of maintaining employment and earning slightly more money than similar ex-prisoners who had not participated in the programs. The report recommends that the BOP explore ways to broaden the incentives for participating in training programs. (KC)

United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, House of Representatives

January 1993

FEDERAL PRISONS

Inmate and Staff Views on Education and Work Training Programs

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January 19, 1993

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
Chairman, Select Committee on
Narcotics Abuse and Control
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report responds to your concerns about the failure of many federal prisoners to complete basic prison education programs and about the usefulness of prison vocational training programs in providing inmates with marketable skills. As agreed with the Committee, we (1) surveyed prison staff and reviewed selected inmate case files and other data to determine if the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) had reliable overall information on inmate participation in these programs and (2) surveyed federal prisoners as well as prison staff on incentives for encouraging inmate participation and on the usefulness of BOP's vocational training and industry work assignments in providing marketable skills.

Background

BOP had about 65,000 inmates in January 1992 and expects that number to grow to about 100,000 by 1995. BOP's education and vocational programs are intended to meet the education and work skill needs of these federal prisoners. Each federal prison has its own education department that is directed by an education supervisor. The supervisor oversees programs designed to meet inmate needs for literacy, English language proficiency, adult continuing education, guidance assessment and counseling, and personal growth and to enhance the inmates' employability upon release. These programs also are designed to maintain prison security by reducing the potential for trouble caused by inmates having too much idle time.

According to BOP, about half of the inmates entering federal prisons lack a high school diploma and, thus, do not meet BOP literacy standards. BOP has had a literacy program since 1982. Literacy was then defined as a sixth grade education, and in 1986 the standard was raised to an eighth grade education. The Crime Control Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-647) directed BOP to have a mandatory functional literacy program for all mentally capable inmates who are not functionally literate and that inmate participation be made mandatory for a period of time that would normally be sufficient to complete the eighth grade level. BOP voluntarily increased its literacy standard from the eighth to twelfth grade and required the inmate to participate for a minimum of 120 days. However, inmates may continue in

the class after this period if they have not obtained a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). All inmates admitted to federal institutions before the implementation of the requirement in May 1991 are excused from participation in the GED program. Literacy requirements depend on the standards at the time an inmate is incarcerated. A number of inmates do not attend the GED class during the regular workday.

The Crime Control Act also required that non-English speaking inmates participate in an English as a second language (ESL) program. Unless specifically exempt, inmates must participate until they achieve the eighth grade level. Inmates exempt from this requirement include those awaiting federal deportation actions.

Participation in BOP's other education programs is voluntary. Adult continuing education courses serve inmates who want to brush up in an area or enroll in a special interest program, such as speed reading. Guidance, counseling, and personal growth programs are designed to help those inmates who want to focus on realistic planning and goal setting for work and related activities during incarceration and after release and to develop a positive self-image.

BOP's work skills programs address the objective of enhancing the employability of inmates upon release. Most inmates are considered to be unskilled at the time of their commitment to prison and have poor work habits. According to BOP data, federal inmates can choose a vocation through instruction, work experiences, and career orientation and acquire practical work knowledge and skills through prison work assignments. In total, BOP's prisons offer voluntary training in over 40 vocational areas. Further, all inmates are generally expected to have a work assignment in prison factories operated by Federal Prison Industries, Inc. (UNICOR) or in an area involving prison maintenance and operations. To obtain promotions to higher levels of pay, inmates must have a high school diploma or GED.

BOP officials told us that many inmates fail to earn the GED or achieve English language proficiency. In March 1992, for example, only about 6,900, 23 percent, of the approximately 30,000 inmates without a high school diploma were enrolled in the literacy program. According to BOP data, approximately 9,600 inmates were exempt from the new literacy requirement, and 2,397 inmates had dropped out after the required enrollment period. The education status of about 6,300 inmates was unknown, and approximately 3,300 inmates should have been enrolled in

the GED program but were not. BOP officials said they also have problems getting inmates to participate in and complete its voluntary education programs. However, BOP officials noted that its college courses typically have one of the highest retention rates with completions exceeding 85 percent.

Results in Brief

Only about 36 percent of the BOP staff we surveyed considered BOP's principal database on inmate prison education activities, the Education Data System (EDS), to be accurate to a very great or great extent. EDS provides information on an inmate's education history, program enrollments, withdrawals, and completions. These data are used by prison education staff in working with their assigned inmates and by headquarters officials in managing the overall education program. BOP's own internal reviews of educational services have frequently noted that key data were inaccurate or missing, and our tests of the education records at three federal prisons revealed similar findings. For example, 12 of the 100 inmate education records we reviewed at 1 facility lacked information on whether the inmates had completed or withdrawn from courses. BOP officials believe that when considered on an aggregate basis, EDS is reliable enough to provide useful data on overall inmate educational activity. They agree, however, that improvements are needed and expect to achieve them by developing uniform and more complete instructions and providing training on updating EDS.

Concerning incentives, the inmates' we surveyed noted that they are inclined to participate in programs when they see clear opportunities for enhancing their capabilities and for postprison success. On the other hand, the staff more so than the inmates we surveyed considered inmates to be motivated by current incentives involving cash awards and other tangible benefits for participation. Not surprisingly, when asked about possible new incentives, staff and inmates strongly favored an incentive of reduced prison time (good time) for participation. BOP has not awarded specific good time for education participation for the last 20 years, but participation in education programs is considered in parole hearings. On the other hand, staff and inmates also strongly favored some ideas that are generally within BOP's discretion, such as security classification reductions, preferred housing assignments, being allowed to attend school during the workday rather than having to do so during free time, and being paid the starting wage for inmate work (12 cents an hour) to attend class.

Given concerns about increasing inmate participation, BOP should explore the feasibility of some of these ideas, perhaps on a test basis. Also, BOP needs to better ensure that prison officials enforce the requirement that inmates lacking a high school diploma acquire the GED before being given pay raises. Only about 39 percent of the surveyed staff said that the requirement is checked always or almost always, 24 percent said most of the time, 10 percent said half the time or less, and 27 percent said they had no basis to judge.

Over half the inmates and three fourths of the staff responding to our surveys thought the inmates' vocational training would generally be useful in providing them with marketable skills. About a third of the inmates considered that employment in UNICOR would be largely helpful. BOP research indicated that inmates who participated in UNICOR work and other vocational programs were more likely to maintain employment and earn slightly more money at the end of their first year back in the community than inmates with similar background characteristics who had not participated in work and vocational training programs.

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objectives, we (1) mailed questionnaires to all BOP education officials and a randomly selected sample of inmates and (2) interviewed officials and reviewed pertinent material at BOP headquarters in Washington, D.C., and at four federal correctional institutions (FCI) in Milan, MI; Terminal Island, CA; Tallahassee, FL; and Petersburg, VA. We selected these facilities principally on the basis of BOP's recommendations and their location in connection with the availability of our staff. To obtain a general overview of prison education and work training, we reviewed available literature and interviewed various officials at selected universities and correctional education associations on issues relating to prison education and work programs.

We used a questionnaire to obtain inmate views on incentives for participation in programs and on the usefulness of vocational training and UNICOR jobs. Institutional maintenance and operations jobs were not included in our questionnaire because these jobs generally address institutional needs rather than likely postrelease employment opportunities. Using BOP's EDS, we mailed the questionnaire to 2,925 inmates selected from 5 groups on the basis of the inmates' experiences with BOP educational services' programs. We pretested the questionnaire at FCI Petersburg and headquarters to determine the likelihood that inmates would understand the questions and accurately report their experiences.

However, in examining the responses, we discovered several large discrepancies between inmate responses and the EDS information from which we drew our sample. In particular, most inmates who EDS indicated had withdrawn from courses reported on the questionnaire that they had not done so. As a result, we decided to combine the responses from all five groups in our reporting; therefore, the responses cannot be projected to the universe of the five groups nor to the entire inmate population. However, we believe that, especially because the initial five groups of inmates were randomly selected, their responses provide suggestive evidence concerning the types of concerns and experiences inmates have with the education programs. (App. I provides more detailed information on the inmate questionnaire and the problems with the sample.)

We also used a questionnaire to obtain staff views on the reliability of EDS, incentives for participation in programs, and the usefulness of vocational training. We mailed it to all BOP education and vocational training staff who were on board as of January 1991. This included administrators in BOP's headquarters and regional offices and all education supervisors and teachers in the federal prisons that were operating at that time. (See app. II for more information on the staff questionnaire.)

To determine compliance with the BOP policy that inmates working in UNICOR not be promoted without a high school diploma or GED, we reviewed UNICOR pay rosters and inmate files at three facilities. We reviewed 100 files at FCI Milan, 113 at FCI Terminal Island, and 53 at FCI Tallahassee.

To determine if BOP had reliable overall information on inmate participation in education and vocational training programs, we reviewed randomly selected samples of inmate files at three prisons, reports on internal reviews conducted by BOP officials, and overall BOP data on the use and maintenance of inmate education files and reporting systems. The prison samples were selected from the files of all inmates who participated in either an education or vocational class during fiscal year 1991. We reviewed 207 randomly selected course enrollments at FCI Terminal Island, 151 enrollments at FCI Milan, and 100 enrollments at FCI Tallahassee. For each sampled case, we compared program enrollment and completion data recorded on BOP's EDS with information contained in the inmate's education file. We discussed discrepancies with prison officials.

We did our work between March 1991 and September 1992 in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards.

Overall Data on Inmate Participation in Education Programs Not Accurate or Complete

BOP relies, in part, on EDS data to manage its overall education and vocational training programs. Information on, among other things, an inmate's educational history, enrollments, withdrawals, and completions is used for a variety of purposes. It is used to keep management informed, to prepare budget estimates, and to set and monitor BOP-wide and individual prison goals on inmate participation in education programs. For example, EDS data will be used to monitor current efforts to achieve a 10-percent increase in inmate enrollments and course completions over the previous year, a goal that BOP set as part of its efforts to promote more inmate participation in education and vocational training programs. Each BOP facility is expected to input data directly into EDS on a regular basis in accordance with its own established procedures and to maintain hard-copy documentation of inmates' prison education activities.

BOP's internal checks or audits of prison operations (referred to as program reviews) have frequently noted problems with the recorded education data. Program reviews of an institution's education program are to be done at least once every 2 years and involve, among other things, a review of the recorded data on inmate education activity. Of the 48 education program reviews conducted at 36 prisons between January 1990 and January 1992, 33 (68 percent) noted concerns with the use of EDS. Twenty-one reviews identified missing or untimely data, and 12 reviews identified inaccurate data. The program reviews revealed a variety of possible causes, including the lack of EDS training and institution-specific procedures for handling education data.

To obtain more information on the EDS' reliability, we asked the education staff that we surveyed various questions about EDS and reviewed inmate education files at three of the prisons we visited. The staff who responded to our questions generally considered EDS to be an important tool for helping them do their job but also indicated problems with its reliability. Only about 36 percent considered EDS to be accurate to a very great or great extent, 40 percent thought it accurate to some or a moderate extent, 2 percent thought it was accurate to little or no extent, and 23 percent said they had no basis to comment on EDS' accuracy. When asked about ways to improve EDS, the staff principally identified the need for standard guidelines (e.g., when to record course completions) and the need for more training on EDS use.

At the three BOP facilities we visited, we compared EDS data with hard-copy documentation maintained in the inmate's education file for randomly selected inmate course enrollments. For each enrollment, we checked EDS and inmate files to determine if the information was consistent regarding (1) course title, (2) inmate status in the course (whether the inmates had completed or withdrawn or were still participating), (3) total hours of instruction, and (4) course start and stop dates.

At FCI Terminal Island, we found 1 or more problems with 127 of the 207 course enrollments reviewed. The problems primarily involved the absence of supporting documentation for EDS data on whether the inmates completed or withdrew from courses (43 enrollments), course start and stop dates (27 enrollments), and hours of instruction (10 enrollments). The facility's education supervisor told us that in light of our findings she would implement a more comprehensive internal control process.

At FCI Tallahassee, we found 1 or more problems with 75 of the 100 course enrollments reviewed. The problems also involved the lack of supporting documentation for course start and stop dates (74 enrollments), hours of instruction (20 enrollments), and whether the final action was a completion or withdrawal (12 enrollments). Prison education department officials told us that the movement of inmates from one facility to another and the use of institution-specific rather than standardized procedures for documenting inmate education histories make it difficult to ensure that inmate files and EDS have the same data. We were told that this will be corrected by the standardized procedures, including the individual inmate electronic transcripts being developed by the Washington education department.

At FCI Milan, the problem was the lack of any hard-copy documentation to verify any of the EDS data for 137 of the 151 enrollments we reviewed. Prison education officials told us that they were aware of the documentation problem and were in the process of updating the files.

Education program officials at BOP's headquarters agreed that problems exist with the EDS data but noted that when considered on an aggregate basis, they believe the data have been sufficient to provide a generally accurate picture of overall inmate participation rates and trends. They also agreed that the problems need to be addressed and expressed the belief that the issuance of BOP-wide guidance and instructions on EDS would achieve that. They told us that an EDS handbook and an EDS training program are being developed. These actions are consistent with the

corrective actions that the staff we surveyed said most frequently were needed. When implemented, these actions should provide better assurances that inmate education activities are properly recorded and documented.

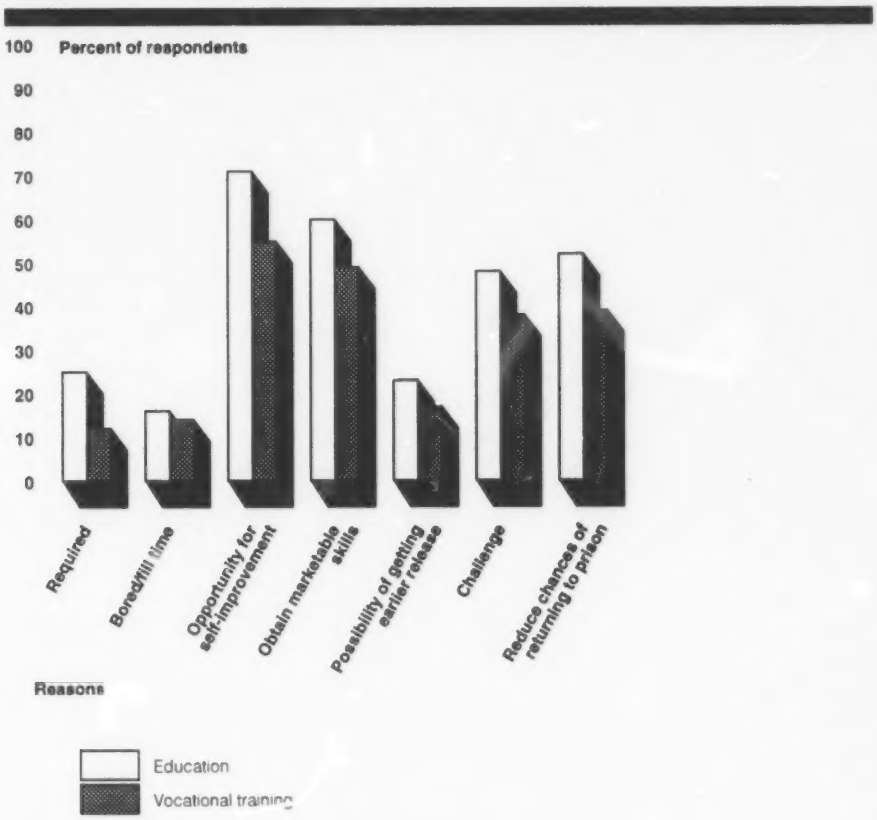
BOP Should Enhance Incentives for Inmate Participation

The inmates responding to our survey indicated the most frequent reasons they participate in programs are their interest in self-improvement and in enhancing their chances for success upon release from prison. The staff more so than the inmates we surveyed considered inmates to be motivated by current incentives involving cash awards and other tangible benefits of participation. Of possible actions BOP could take to better promote participation, the surveyed staff and inmates identified several potentially significant incentives, such as granting preferred housing assignments and allowing inmates to attend school during the workday rather than being required to do so during free time. Given concerns about increasing inmate participation, BOP should explore the feasibility of some of these ideas and, if warranted, consider some tests or pilots. Also, some inmates who lacked a high school diploma received UNICOR pay raises without getting the required GED. BOP needs to ensure that its institutions support this incentive for program participation by stricter enforcement of the requirement.

In addition to having BOP require inmate participation in the GED program for a period of time to be determined by BOP, the Crime Control Act of 1990 required BOP to establish appropriate incentives to encourage inmates to complete the literacy and ESL programs. Under BOP policy, prison officials are responsible for devising and implementing incentives to encourage completion of the literacy program. BOP's education department also uses incentives to encourage completion of other education and vocational training programs.

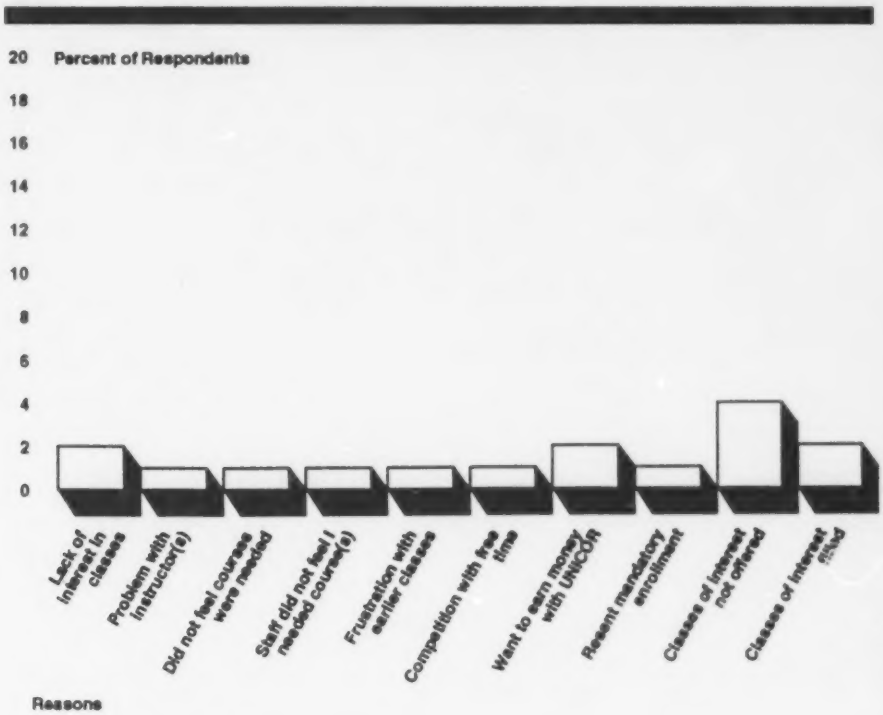
To obtain an overall perspective on inmate participation, we first asked the inmates to comment on the significance of various specified reasons for participation. We asked for their opinions using a scale of one to five with five meaning that the factor was applicable to little or no extent and one meaning that it was applicable to a very great extent. Inmates could also have answered "no basis to judge." They could also write in factors other than those listed. Figure 1 shows the percentage of inmates who thought that each factor was a reason for participation in education and vocational training programs to a very great or great extent.

Figure 1: Inmates' Reasons for Participating in Education and Vocational Training Classes



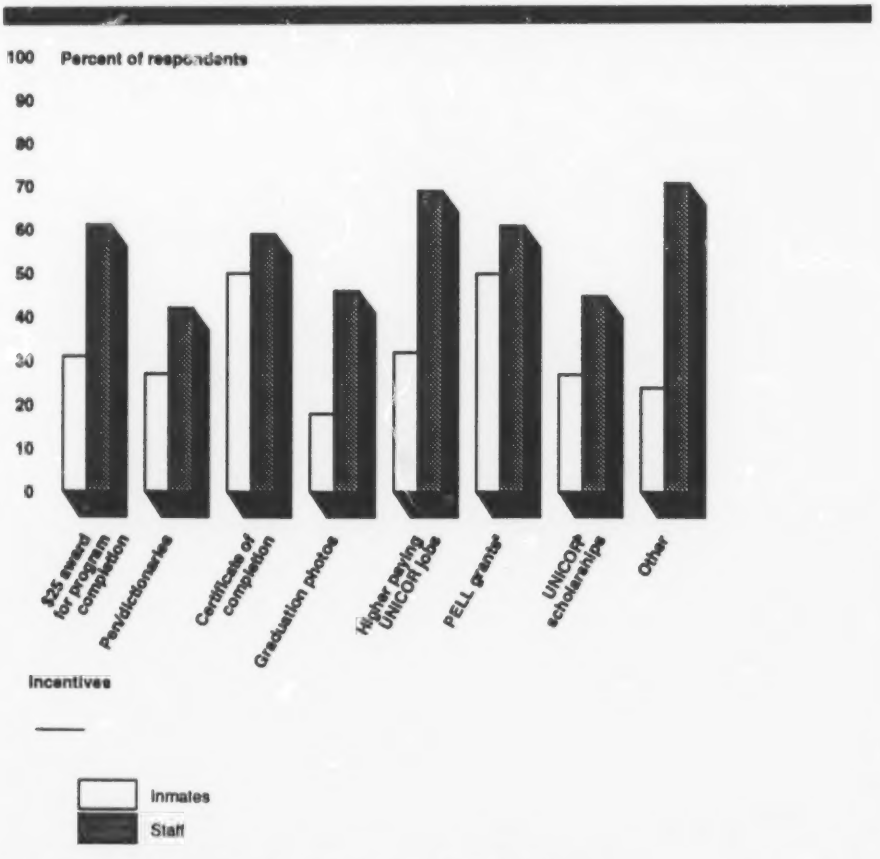
Of the inmates responding to our survey, 27 percent reported that they had not participated in any education or vocational training programs during fiscal years 1990 and 1991. We asked them to explain why by checking one or more of the reasons we listed; they could also write in other reasons. As shown in figure 2, the availability of classes of interest and the desire to spend their time earning money by working in UNICOR were the reasons checked most by the inmates.

Figure 2: Inmates' Reasons for Not Participating in Courses



We next asked inmates and prison education staff to rate, using the five-point scale, various tangible in-prison incentives for program participation. BOP education officials told us that these were the incentives being used throughout BOP. Figure 3 shows the percentage of inmates and staff who considered the incentives to be very greatly or greatly useful in encouraging participation.

Figure 3: Staff and Inmates Who Considered Current Incentives to Be Very Greatly or Greatly Useful



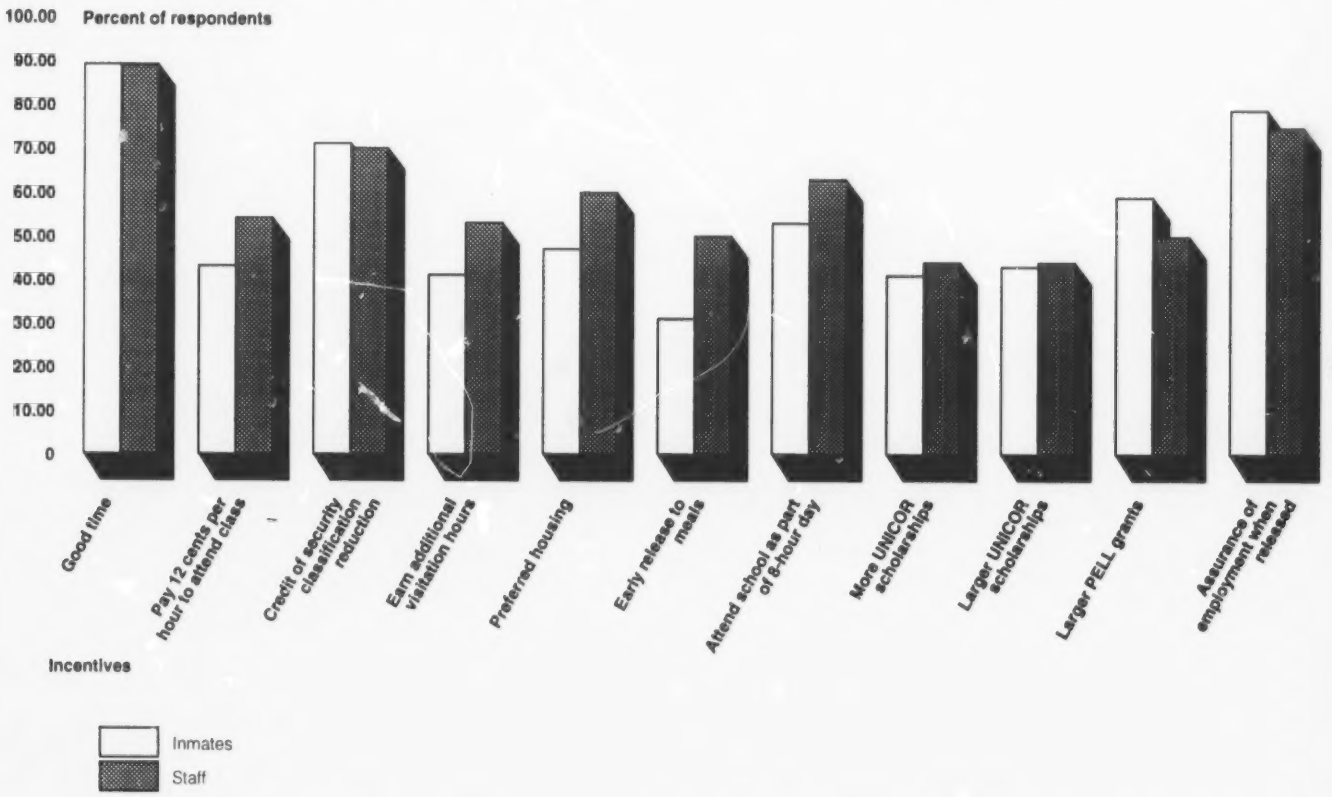
[a]Pell grants allow inmates to receive up to $2,400 for college classes.

[b]UNICOR scholarships provide approved inmates between $200 and $300 per quarter for college courses.

The incentive of higher paying UNICOR jobs is to be used BOP-wide to encourage inmates to complete needed GED programs. The extent to which the other incentives are used may vary from one facility to another. As shown, the BOP staff considered each incentive to be a more significant motivator than the inmates.

Finally, we asked the inmates and staff about possible new incentives to increase inmate participation. Figure 4 shows the percentage of inmates and staff who viewed possible new incentives to be very greatly or greatly useful.

Figure 4: Staff and Inmate Responses to Possible Incentives



Some of these incentives could be readily adopted by BOP, and some could not. For example, good time was favored by nearly 90 percent of the inmate and staff respondents. For 20 years participation in education programs was considered in parole hearings, though good time was not granted for this separately. However, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 abolished both good time and parole for anyone sentenced for an offense committed after November 1, 1987. Under current law, such inmates may earn a maximum credit of 54 days a year for satisfactory behavior. Congressional action would be needed to increase the annual or total number of such days available, if Congress wished to give additional credit for participation in educational programs. As to incentives not requiring a legislative change, all three—preferred housing assignments,

reducing custody level reductions, and school attendance during the workday—were identified by about half or more of the surveyed staff and inmates as likely to be very greatly or greatly useful in promoting inmate participation. Although not as highly favored, many inmates and staff also considered pay, extended visitation hours, and early release to meals to be potentially significant incentives. Given concerns about increasing inmates' rates of participation in programs, we believe that BOP should explore the feasibility of some of these ideas and, if warranted, consider doing tests or pilots. BOP could, for example, make participation in programs a part of the criteria used to decide on inmate custody level reductions and preferred housing. BOP officials said that this may now be done informally by many institutions and that it probably should be made a formal part of the criteria used to make those decisions.

Link Between UNICOR Pay and Education Level Not Always Made

Inmates who are not physically disabled or who are not a security risk are required to have an institution or UNICOR job assignment. To further encourage inmates who entered the system after May 1991 to participate in and complete needed education programs, BOP requires that inmates not be promoted beyond their starting pay levels without having their high school diploma or GED. For example, inmates employed at UNICOR start at 44 cents per hour and could advance through four pay levels to a pay of $1.10 an hour. As it did with the requirement for mandatory participation in the literacy program, BOP exempted inmates who were being paid at the higher levels when the diploma or GED requirement became effective in May 1991.

We tested BOP's enforcement of this policy for UNICOR promotions by asking prison staff about their adherence to the requirement and by reviewing selected inmate files at three of the prisons we visited. We found that the requirement is often not enforced.

Only about 39 percent of the surveyed staff said that the requirement is checked always or almost always, 24 percent said most of the time, 10 percent said half the time or less, and 27 percent said they had no basis to judge.

At the prisons we visited, we found that in some cases inmates who were subject to the literacy requirement had received pay raises without any documented evidence of a high school diploma or GED and without being exempt from that requirement. This involved 19 of 113 inmate cases we reviewed at FCI Terminal Island and 3 of 53 cases reviewed at FCI

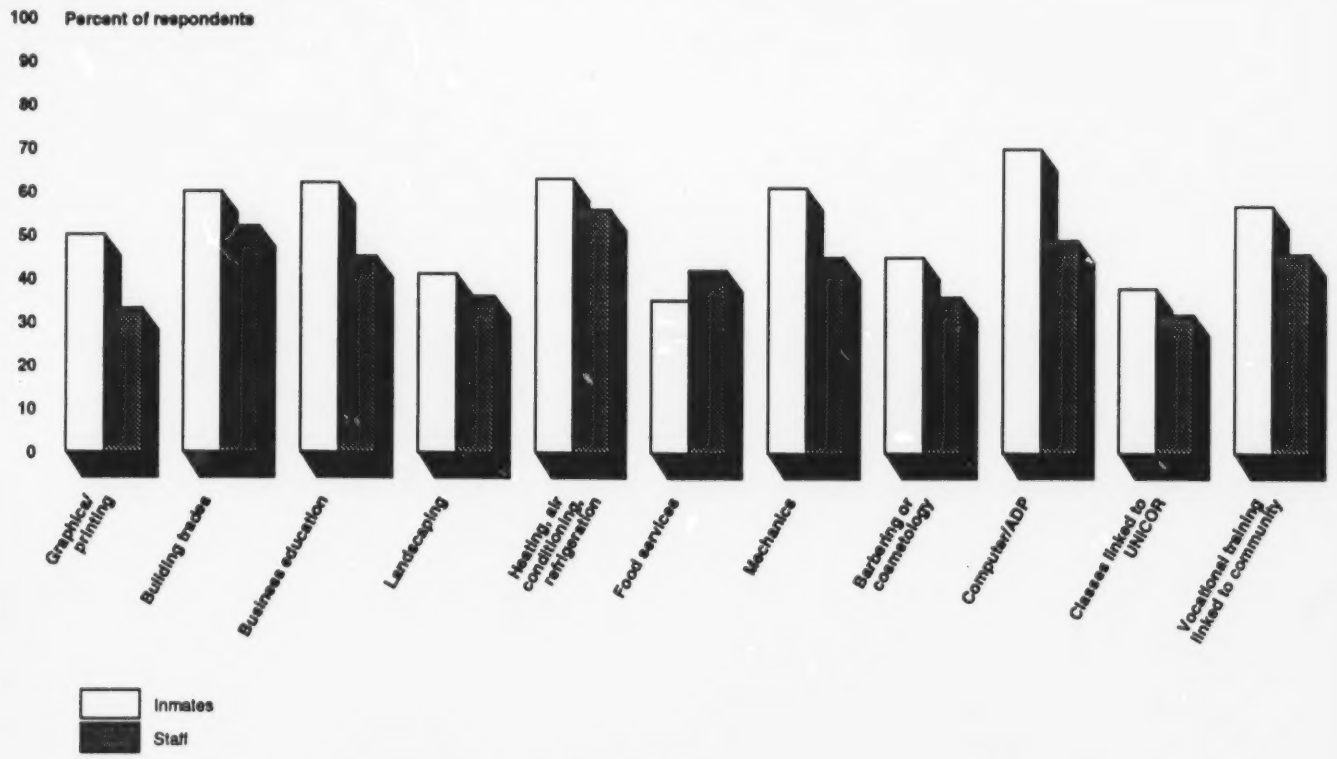
Tallahassee. We found no problem with the 100 cases reviewed at FCI Milan. FCI Terminal Island officials told us that internal controls would be beneficial in ensuring proper pay was received.

Views on Postrelease Usefulness of Vocational Training and UNICOR Jobs

Of the inmates we surveyed, 24 percent said that they had participated in a vocational program during the last 2 years, and 8 percent were enrolled in a program at the time of the survey. Of the inmates responding to this question, about 54 percent thought that the vocational training they had received would be probably or definitely useful in providing them with marketable job skills, 11 percent thought it would not be useful, and 35 percent were uncertain or had no basis to judge. Three fourths of the staff thought that BOP's vocational training would probably or definitely assist inmates in finding employment after release.

We also asked the inmates and staff to comment on the usefulness of vocational training by type. Figure 5 shows the percentage of inmates and staff who considered the 11 vocational training classes offered by BOP to be very greatly or greatly useful.

Figure 5: Usefulness of Vocational Training



About 65 percent of the inmates also told us that they expect to seek employment in 1 or more of the 11 vocational training areas, and 31 percent said they would seek employment in other areas such as farming and welding. About 4 percent said they did not plan to seek employment.

Concerning the importance of UNICOR, approximately one third of the inmates responding to this question believed that participating in UNICOR helped an inmate get a job upon release, compared to about 17 percent who believed UNICOR participation is unimportant. About 37 percent of those inmates indicated they had no basis to judge how important or

unimportant participation in UNICOR is in helping an inmate get a job upon release.

BOP Research on Usefulness

In 1992, BOP released its Federal Post Release Employment Project (PREP) study. The PREP study linked work experience and vocational training to an offender's behavior upon release. The study found that inmates who participated in UNICOR work or other vocational programming showed better adjustment and were less likely to have their parole revoked (as a result of committing a crime or a technical violation of their parole). Also, the study found that these inmates were more likely to maintain employment and seemed to earn slightly more money at the end of their first year back in the community than inmates who had similar background characteristics but did not participate in work or vocational training programs.

The study examined the following three groups of inmates: (1) a study group that consisted of federal offenders who received work experience or training; (2) a comparison group that included similar offenders who did not participate in these activities; and (3) a baseline group that was composed of offenders who represented all other inmates released in the same period as the other two groups. Study group inmates were identified by case management staff at the institutions over a period of several years. Inmates were selected for the study group before their release if they had participated in industrial work for at least 6 months or had received vocational training. All offenders were released during 1984 through 1986, and follow-ups were attempted at 6 and 12 months.

We believe that the study was a well-designed and ambitious effort, and the results generally supported the conclusion of a correlation between UNICOR work experience and postrelease outcomes, at least for the population studied. Almost all of the reported results were in the direction of a difference between the control and study groups. BOP reported that most results were statistically significant. Given the efforts to both match the study and control groups, and then to introduce additional statistical controls into the analysis, the results presented a plausible argument that the program has had a positive effect.

However, four factors (acknowledged by the authors of the study) limit the conclusiveness of this study. First, the absence of random assignment introduced a potentially serious threat to the validity of the study. Second, the difference between the study and control groups cannot be generalized

to the broader population of released inmates. Both the study and control groups had parole revocation rates noticeably below the BOP recidivism study, suggesting that there were some characteristics (probably those used in the matching of control to study group) that made these individuals better candidates for successful outcomes. Third, the statistical significance of many of the differences was somewhat less compelling than it appeared because it is fairly easy to find statistically significant differences in samples as large as the one in this study. Fourth, because the report did not assess the duration of the intervention, the study results remain somewhat tentative. For example, the findings would be more conclusive had they determined that inmates with similar sentence lengths had better outcomes if they were in UNICOR programs for twice as long as others.

In short, we believe this report presents a highly suggestive set of findings concerning the possible usefulness of the study programs. The efforts to match subjects, and the tendency of reported results to be in the anticipated direction, are grounds for optimism. However, because of the limitations mentioned previously, we believe it is premature to conclude on the basis of this study that a link exists between inmate work experience and vocational training and postrelease adjustment. Some of the limitations are built into the nature of such studies, and no single study is likely to demonstrate a clear effect. Other limitations might be addressed with further analysis of the data or with additional studies that might support the findings of the PREP study.

Conclusions

In many instances, BOP's information on inmate education activities was not accurate and complete. Only about a third of the staff we surveyed considered EDS to be accurate to a very great or great extent. Also, BOP's own internal reviews have frequently noted that key data were inaccurate or missing, and our reviews of the education records at three FCIs revealed similar findings. Although they believe EDS to be generally sufficient for providing overall information and revealing trends about inmate participation, BOP officials agreed that corrective actions are needed. Consequently, they plan to issue a handbook and provide training on EDS. These are actions that we believe are basically consistent with what the surveyed staff told us and what our reviews of records at the three FCIs showed needed to be done.

Concerning incentives, inmates' responses indicated they are more inclined to participate in programs when they see clear opportunities for

their capabilities and chances for postprison success. Prison staff consider current incentives involving tangible in-prison benefits to be more useful than inmates do. To a large extent, both the staff and inmates favored some possible incentives that are within BOP's discretion, such as security classification reductions, preferred housing assignments, being allowed to attend school during the workday rather than having to do so during free time, and being paid the starting wage for inmate work (12 cents an hour) to attend class. Given concerns about increasing inmate participation, BOP should consider adopting some of these ideas, perhaps on a test basis. Also, BOP needs to better ensure that prison officials enforce the policy requiring that inmates lacking a high school diploma earn the GED before being given pay raises. Not all inmate pay raises we reviewed had documented evidence that the requirement had been met, and about 10 percent of the surveyed staff told us that the requirement was checked half the time or less for the inmates given pay raises.

Over half the inmates thought their vocational training would generally be useful in providing them with marketable skills; about one third considered that employment in UNICOR would be helpful. BOP research indicated that inmates who participated in UNICOR work and other vocational programming were more likely to maintain employment and earn slightly more money at the end of their first year back in the community than inmates who had similar background characteristics but had not participated in work and vocational training programs.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Attorney General require the BOP Director to explore broadening the incentives used to promote inmate participation in and completion of education and vocational training programs. In particular, BOP should explore the feasibility of using as incentives preferred housing assignments, custody level reductions, and school attendance during the regular workday and if warranted, consider doing tests or pilots. The Director should also require that his staff better ensure that pay raises not be granted to inmates who have not completed and are not exempt from the literacy requirement.

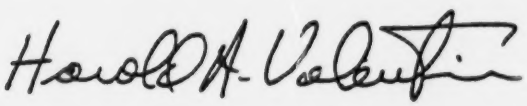
Agency Comments

We discussed the contents of a draft of this report with BOP officials, who generally agreed with its contents and recommendations. BOP's comments on our recommendations are in appendix IV.

As arranged with the Committee, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its date, unless you publicly release its contents earlier. At that time, we will send copies to the Attorney General, the Director of BOP, and other interested parties. Copies will also be made available to others on request.

The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix V. Should you need additional information on the contents of this report, please call me on (202) 566-0026.

Sincerely yours,



Harold A. Valentine
Associate Director, Administration
of Justice Issues

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Abbreviations

BOP	Federal Bureau of Prisons
EDS	Education Data System
ESL	English as a second language
FCI	Federal Correctional Institution
GED	General Equivalency Diploma
PREP	Federal Post Release Employment Project
UNICOR	Federal Prison Industries, Inc.

Description of Questionnaire Methodologies

As part of our review of correctional education and vocational training, we wanted to obtain the opinions of BOP education and vocational training staff and inmates on impediments to completion of programs and on the usefulness of training offered. To accomplish this, we mailed questionnaires to 2,925 randomly selected inmates and all education and vocational training staff on board as of January 1991. On that date, the staff database contained approximately 700 education-related employees.

Inmate Questionnaire

We designed the inmate questionnaire (app. II) in order to gather information about inmates' experiences with the correctional education system. Before administering the questionnaire, BOP officials reviewed it, and we pretested it on a random sample of inmates at FCI Petersburg.

To answer questions concerning the views of inmates who had withdrawn from, and completed, particular types of courses, we designed a sampling plan that included the following five strata of inmates:

Stratum 1:
Voluntarily withdrew from a basic education course in the past 2 years.

Stratum 2:
Completed a basic education course in the past 2 years.

Stratum 3:
Voluntarily withdrew from a vocational education course in the past 2 years.

Stratum 4:
Completed a vocational education course in the past 2 years.

Stratum 5:
No enrollments in any education courses in the past 2 years.

We asked BOP to identify the five universes of inmates falling into these five strata and draw a random sample of 600 names from each strata. We verified the programs BOP used in terms of the programming logic; however, we were not familiar enough with the specific variables in the database to certify that the correct inmates were placed in the desired categories. Because the strata are not mutually exclusive, the same inmate could appear in more than one. As a result, strata 6 through 12 in table I.1 represent the number of inmates that fell into more than one strata.

Table I.1: Number of Inmates in Each Stratum

Strata	No. of inmates in sample
1. Withdrawals, basic education	600
2. Completions, basic education	600
3. Withdrawals, vocational education	600
4. Completions, vocational education	600
5. No enrollments	600
6. Combined 1 and 2	7
7. Combined 1 and 3	15
8. Combined 1 and 4	2
9. Combined 2 and 3	5
10. Combined 2 and 4	6
11. Combined 3 and 4	21
12. Combined 2, 3, and 4	3

In order to avoid sending out 12 separate questionnaire groups, for those inmates in combined groups with less than 10 people (strata 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12), we randomly reassigned inmates to one of the two original strata (1 to 5). We decided to consider the other two strata (7 and 11) separately; one questionnaire was sent to each inmate in these groups, and we planned to analyze them as falling into both of the original strata groups. As a result, seven strata were defined for the mail out, and identifying codes on the questionnaire allowed us to determine the relevant strata when they were returned.

Using this method, a total of 2,925 questionnaires were mailed. Because BOP routinely opens inmate mail, we agreed to send the questionnaire in batches to each prison facility. Sealed envelopes (with the questionnaire and a return envelope) were to be delivered to each inmate at a common time, and BOP education officials would be present to help read questions for inmates needing assistance. The inmates would seal the envelopes and hand them back to the BOP official, who would mail them back to us. On the basis of our follow-up telephone calls to many of the prisons, we believe this approach was followed in most instances.

We mailed the questionnaire in November 1991 and conducted follow-up telephone calls to prison officials in January 1992. Because of the anonymity of the questionnaire, inmates were not contacted personally by GAO.

In examining the returned questionnaires, we discovered several large discrepancies between inmate responses and the expectations of our sample design. In particular, although everyone in stratum 1 should have withdrawn from at least one basic education course, 241 of the 365 returned questionnaires indicated otherwise in their response to question 16. Also, everyone in strata 3 should have withdrawn from one vocational training course, but 226 of the 384 returned questionnaires indicated no in their response to question 16.

We believe that there are three possible reasons for the discrepancies: (1) inmates were incorrectly reporting their experiences, either because they were forgetting or because they were lying; (2) inmates were correctly reporting their experiences, and the BOP database was incorrect; or (3) a combination of these two factors. BOP officials favored the first explanation, but we were not convinced that such a large proportion of inmates were likely to forget such a recent event or that withdrawing from a course is likely to be cause for embarrassment or deceit among so many inmates.

Whatever the cause, we were unable to determine whether the strata accurately reflected the intended populations. As a result, we decided to ignore the individual strata for our analysis. (Inmates in the two combination strata were treated as single respondents, since only one questionnaire was sent to each inmate.) Therefore, the 1,899 returned questionnaires were not statistically representative of all inmates, nor can they be used to generalize to subpopulations of inmates who withdrew from or completed courses. However, because the inmates were selected randomly within these groupings, we believe that they provide highly suggestive evidence concerning many of the types of concerns and experiences inmates have with the education system.

Survey Response

Our overall response rate for the inmate questionnaire was 72 percent. Using information provided by BOP officials on our inmate lists as well as written information on many of the returned questionnaires, table I.2 shows response and nonresponse categories.

Table I.2: Response and Nonresponse Categories for Inmate Questionnaire

(A) Questionnaires sent	2,925
(B) Inmates had died or been released	30
(C) Inmates transferred to another institution or halfway house[a]	131
(D) Other not completed questionnaires[b]	119
(E) Adjusted sample [A - (B+C+D)]	2,645
(F) Returned completed	1,899
(G) Response rate (F/E)	72%

[a]Because of logistical and time considerations, we were unable to redirect questionnaires to inmates who had been transferred to a different facility between the date we received our address lists from BOP and the date we mailed the questionnaires.

[b]Questionnaires were not completed because inmates were in a segregated unit, or in writ, or medically disabled. Line (D) also includes inmates not at institutions for unknown reasons.

Any survey is subject to measurement error. The method of administration may have introduced confusion or bias, particularly if inmates believed that BOP staff would reopen the completed questionnaires before returning them to us. Inmates might have been unwilling to report negative experiences, such as withdrawals or reasons for dissatisfaction with the program. Some of the inmates may have had problems understanding the questions, either because of language difficulties or because of the complexity of some of the matrix questions. We have no basis to believe any of these factors introduced systematic bias into our results.

Staff Questionnaire

In order to determine BOP educational staff perspectives, we sent questionnaires to all civil service and contract teachers and instructors employed by BOP as of January 1991. We developed questions in discussions with BOP officials at headquarters, regional staff at a BOP conference, and educational staff in pretests. We mailed 702 questionnaires in November 1991. We did not promise anonymity to the respondents because we felt they were unlikely to believe that they could not be identified from their positions and experiences. However, the questionnaires were mailed out by, and returned directly to, GAO. We received 561 questionnaires, for a response rate of 80 percent.

We believe the most important source of measurement error may be because of potential fear of reprisal, which is related in part to the lack of anonymity. We received telephone calls from staff who were afraid that their responses might be used against them, and some of the written

comments indicated similar nervousness. It is possible that, due to this concern, staff attitudes are more negative than reported.

Survey of Federal Prison Inmates

Survey of Federal Prison Inmates on Correctional Education and Training

Introduction

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), an independent agency of congress that evaluates federal programs, is surveying federal prison inmates to find out their experience with educational and vocational training.

You have been randomly selected for this survey. Your participation is voluntary and your response will be treated anonymously. By "anonymously" we mean that neither we nor anyone else will know how you or any particular individual responded to any questions. The responses will be combined with those of others and reported only in summary form.

The questionnaire can be completed in about 25 minutes. Most of the questions can be easily answered by checking boxes or filling in blanks. Space is provided for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire.

After you have completed the questionnaire, please place it in the enclosed envelope, SEAL the envelope and return it to the education official administering it. The envelope will not be opened until we receive it at GAO.

Thank you for helping us in this important study.

• • • • •

ATTENTION: TO MAINTAIN ANONYMITY, DO NOT PLACE ANY IDENTIFICATION, SUCH AS YOUR NAME OR REGISTER NUMBER, ANY WHERE ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

I. Background

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed? *(Check one.)*

N=1,892

1.	☐	8th grade or less	7 %
2.	☐	Some high school	12 %
3.	☐	High school graduate or GED	35 %
4.	☐	Some college	31 %
5.	☐	College graduate	10 %
6.	☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	5 %

2. Have you completed any apprenticeship or vocational training program? *(Check one box in each row.)*

PROGRAMS		Yes (1)	No (2)
1. Apprenticeship	N=1,237	22 %	78 %
2. Vocational training	N=1,531	46 %	54 %

3. What is the length of the sentence you received? *(Enter months.)*

1. Fixed length (sentencing guidelines) _____ (Months)

OR

2. Maximum (pre-sentencing guidelines) _____ (Months)

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4. How much of your sentence have you served? *(Enter number of months.)*

_____
(Months served)

5. What is your projected release date? *(Enter date. If date unknown, check box.)*

|_____|_____|_____|
(Month) (Day) (Year)

☐ Don't know - no projected release date

6. Before you were incarcerated, were you employed full-time for more than six months? *(Check one.)*

N=1,823

1.	☐	Yes *(Continue to Question 7.)*	76 %
2.	☐	No *(Skip to PART II, below.)*	24 %

7. In what occupation were you employed before you were incarcerated?

II. Experience with UNICOR, Educational, or Vocational Training Program

8. Did you work in UNICOR between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991? *(Check one.)*

N=1,840

1.	☐	Yes	39 %
2.	☐	No	61 %

9. Are you currently working in UNICOR? *(Check one.)*

N=1,846

1.	☐	Yes	34 %
2.	☐	No	66 %

10. To what extent, if at all, does UNICOR employment keep you, or has UNICOR employment kept you, from participating in educational classes or vocational training? *(Check one.)*

N=1,654

1.	☐	Very great extent	7 %
2.	☐	Great extent	5 %
3.	☐	Moderate extent	7 %
4.	☐	Some extent	7 %
5.	☐	Little or no extent	21 %
6.	☐	No basis to judge	54 %

11. In which of the following educational and vocational training programs, if any, are you currently enrolled? *(Check one.)*

N=1,828

1.	☐	Adult Basic Education	2 %
2.	☐	GED	7 %
3.	☐	Postsecondary Education	4 %
4.	☐	Continuing Education	5 %
5.	☐	English as a Second Language	4 %
6.	☐	Vocational Training	8 %
7.	☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	9 %
8.	☐	Not currently taking any course	51 %
		TWO OR MORE CHECKED	10 %

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12. In which of the following educational and vocational training programs, if any, did you participate between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991? *(Check all that apply.)*

N=1,899

Note: The percentages represent the proportion of the responding inmates who checked this item.

1. ☐	Adult Basic Education	23 %
2. ☐	GED	24 %
3. ☐	Postsecondary Education	7 %
4. ☐	Continuing Education	9 %
5. ☐	English as a Second Language	10 %
6. ☐	Vocational Training	24 %
7. ☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	15 %
8. ☐	Did not take any course	27 %

If you have taken <u>any</u> of the above courses between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991, skip to Question 14. Otherwise, continue to Question 13.

13. If you did <u>not</u> take any course in the period of October 1, 1989 through September 30, 1991, which of the following were the reasons? *(Check all that apply.)*

N=1,899

Note: The percentages represent the proportion of the responding inmates who checked this item.

1. ☐	Lack of interest in the classes offered	2 %
2. ☐	Problem with instructor(s)	1 %
3. ☐	Did not feel courses were needed	1 %
4. ☐	Staff did not feel I needed course(s)	1 %
5. ☐	Frustration with earlier classes	1 %
6. ☐	Competition with free time	1 %
7. ☐	Want to earn money with UNICOR	2 %
8. ☐	Resent mandatory enrollment	1 %
9. ☐	Classes of interest not offered	4 %
10. ☐	Classes of interest filled	2 %
11. ☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	5 %

14. Between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991, have you asked to take educational or vocational training classes that you could not get? *(Check one.)*

N=1,738

1. ☐	Yes *(Please specify class(es).)* _____ _____ _____	33 %
2. ☐	No	67 %

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15. How many individual educational or vocational training classes have you taken in the last two years (October 1, 1989 through September 30, 1991)? *(Check one box in each column.)*

NUMBER OF CLASSES TAKEN	Educational (1) N=1,518	Vocational (2) N=1,249
1. None	38 %	45 %
2. One	21 %	24 %
3. Two	16 %	11 %
4. Three	9 %	3 %
5. Four	4 %	2 %
6. Five or more	14 %	17 %

16. Have you voluntarily withdrawn (that is, you chose to withdraw) from any educational or vocational training classes in the last two years (October 1, 1989 through September 30, 1991)? *(Check one.)*

N=1,642

1. ☐ Yes *(Continue to Question 17.)* 23 %
2. ☐ No *(Skip to Question 19.)* 77 %

17. How many educational and vocational training classes did you voluntarily withdraw from between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991? *(Enter number. If none, enter "0.")*

1. Vocational classes _____
2. Educational classes _____

18. If you voluntarily withdrew from either educational or vocational training classes between October 1, 1989 and September 30, 1991, which of the following were the reasons? *(Check all that apply in each column. If you did not withdraw from educational or vocational training classes, check row 10.)*

N=1,899

Note: The percentages represent the proportion of the responding inmates who checked this item.

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING	Educational classes (1)	Vocational classes (2)
1. Lack of interest in the classes offered	2 %	1 %
2. Class not what I expected	3 %	2 %
3. Problem with instructor(s)	2 %	1 %
4. Did not feel it was needed	1 %	1 %
5. Frustration with class	3 %	1 %
6. Competition with free time	1 %	1 %
7. Wanted to earn money in UNICOR	2 %	2 %
8. Resented mandatory enrollment	1 %	0 %
9. Other *(Please specify.)* _____	2 %	3 %
10. Not applicable/did not withdraw	2 %	1 %

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19. To what extent, if any, have you participated in educational classes for each of the following reasons? *(Check one box in each row.)*

POSSIBLE REASONS		Very great extent (1)	Greatly extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	Not applicable (6)
1. Required	N=1,136	20 %	5 %	7 %	7 %	12 %	49 %
2. Bored/to fill time	N=1,029	10 %	6 %	8 %	13 %	20 %	44 %
3. Opportunity for self improvement	N=1,380	60 %	11 %	7 %	3 %	2 %	17 %
4. Obtain marketable skills	N=1,150	50 %	10 %	8 %	5 %	5 %	24 %
5. Possibility of getting earlier release	N=1,070	19 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	14 %	53 %
6. Challenge	N=1,103	37 %	11 %	10 %	8 %	8 %	26 %
7. Enhance chances of not committing crime after release	N=1,175	46 %	6 %	4 %	4 %	8 %	32 %
8. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____	N=140	31 %	1 %	2 %	0 %	1 %	14 %

[1] Forty-nine percent of the inmates responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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20. To what extent, if any, have you participated in vocational training classes for each of the following reasons? *(Check one box in each row.)*

POSSIBLE REASONS		Very great extent (1)	Greatly extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	Not applicable (6)
1. Required	N=1,051	10 %	2 %	5 %	4 %	13 %	67 %
2. Bored/to fill time	N=1,002	9 %	5 %	5 %	9 %	16 %	57 %
3. Opportunity for self improvement	N=1,238	47 %	8 %	5 %	3 %	3 %	34 %
4. Obtain marketable skills	N=1,104	41 %	8 %	6 %	3 %	4 %	39 %
5. Possibility of getting earlier release	N=1,008	14 %	3 %	4 %	4 %	13 %	62 %
6. Challenge	N=1,049	29 %	9 %	7 %	5 %	7 %	42 %
7. Enhance chances of not committing crime after release	N=1,072	34 %	5 %	4 %	2 %	8 %	47 %
8. Other *(Please specify.)* _____	N=96	22 %	2 %	2 %	0 %	0 %	19 %

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III. Incentives

21. How useful, or not, are the following incentives (already available in BOP) to encourage you to participate in educational and vocational training classes? *(Check one box in each row.)*

INCENTIVES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. $25.00 cash award for program completion	N=1,399	24 %	7 %	9 %	13 %	21 %	27 %
2. Pens/dictionaries	N=1,287	16 %	11 %	12 %	12 %	25 %	26 %
3. Certificates of completion	N=1,445	36 %	14 %	12 %	8 %	15 %	16 %
4. Graduation photos	N=1,280	13 %	5 %	7 %	10 %	36 %	31 %
5. Qualify for higher paying UNICOR jobs	N=1,325	23 %	9 %	8 %	7 %	20 %	32 %
6. High quality programs	N=1,315	32 %	13 %	9 %	7 %	14 %	25 %
7. UNICOR scholarships	N=1,264	20 %	7 %	7 %	5 %	22 %	40 %
8. Pell grants	N=1,319	40 %	10 %	6 %	4 %	13 %	27 %
9. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____ _____ _____	N=120	21 %	3 %	2 %	0 %	3 %	8 %

[1] Sixty-four percent of the inmates responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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22. If they become available, how useful or not would each of the following incentives be in increasing your interest in participating in educational and vocational training classes? *(Check one box in each row.)*

POSSIBLE INCENTIVES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Good time (ability to earn reduction in sentence)	N=1,652	84 %	5 %	1 %	1 %	2 %	7 %
2. Pay grade 4 IPP ($.12/hour) to attend class	N=1,348	34 %	9 %	12 %	9 %	22 %	14 %
3. Credit toward security classification reduction	N=1,430	62 %	9 %	6 %	5 %	8 %	10 %
4. Earn additional visitation hours	N=1,345	35 %	6 %	10 %	10 %	22 %	17 %
5. Preferred housing or bed assignment	N=1,345	38 %	9 %	13 %	8 %	19 %	14 %
6. Early release to meals	N=1,323	27 %	4 %	13 %	12 %	28 %	16 %
7. Attend school as part of 8 hour day rather than on free time	N=1,367	41 %	12 %	12 %	8 %	15 %	13 %
8. More UNICOR scholarships	N=1,319	32 %	9 %	8 %	5 %	16 %	29 %
9. Larger UNICOR scholarships	N=1,305	34 %	9 %	8 %	5 %	16 %	29 %
10. Larger Pell grants	N=1,333	50 %	9 %	7 %	4 %	11 %	20 %
11. Assurance of employment when released	N=1,506	71 %	8 %	4 %	3 %	5 %	9 %
12. Other *(Please specify.)* [*] _____ _____ _____	N=81	41 %	1 %	0 %	3 %	1 %	5 %

[*] Forty-nine percent of the inmates responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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IV. Future Plans

23. Do you believe educational and vocational training classes you have taken will reduce your chances of returning to prison? *(Check one box in each row.)*

CLASSES		WILL REDUCE CHANCES OF RETURNING TO PRISON?					
		Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Uncertain (3)	Probably no (4)	Definitely no (5)	No basis to judge/ not applicable (6)
1. Educational	N=1,709	46 %	12 %	7 %	5 %	7 %	23 %
2. Vocational training	N=1,488	43 %	12 %	6 %	4 %	7 %	29 %

24. Do you think the educational and vocational training classes you have attended will assist you in getting a job once you are released? *(Check one box in each row.)*

CLASSES		WILL ASSIST IN GETTING A JOB ONCE RELEASED?					
		Definitely yes (1)	Probably yes (2)	Uncertain (3)	Probably no (4)	Definitely no (5)	No basis to judge/ not applicable (6)
1. Educational	N=1,694	42 %	16 %	10 %	7 %	6 %	19 %
2. Vocational training	N=1,470	38 %	16 %	9 %	5 %	6 %	26 %

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25. How useful or not is each of the following vocational training classes in helping an inmate get a job upon release? *(Check one box in each row.)*

VOCATIONAL TRAINING CLASSES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Graphics/printing	N=1,468	34 %	16 %	15 %	6 %	4 %	25 %
2. Building trades	N=1,482	41 %	19 %	12 %	5 %	4 %	19 %
3. Business education	N=1,494	43 %	19 %	12 %	6 %	4 %	17 %
4. Landscaping	N=1,419	25 %	16 %	17 %	13 %	8 %	21 %
5. Heating, air conditioning, refrigeration	N=1,483	42 %	21 %	11 %	5 %	3 %	19 %
6. Food services	N=1,424	23 %	12 %	17 %	13 %	14 %	22 %
7. Mechanics (auto, small engine, diesel)	N=1,483	41 %	20 %	12 %	5 %	4 %	19 %
8. Barbering/cosmetology	N=1,422	30 %	15 %	16 %	10 %	7 %	23 %
9. Computer/ADP	N=1,505	55 %	15 %	7 %	4 %	4 %	17 %
10. Those classes linked to UNICOR (e.g., business education and UNICOR ADP)	N=1,412	25 %	13 %	12 %	7 %	9 %	34 %
11. Vocational training linked to the community	N=1,451	42 %	15 %	11 %	5 %	4 %	24 %
12. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____ _____ _____	N=104	45 %	0 %	2 %	0 %	1 %	7 %

[1] Forty-nine percent of the inmates responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

26. After release from prison, in which of the following areas, if any, do you expect to seek employment? *(Check all that apply.)*

N=1,899

Note: The percentages represent the proportion of the responding inmates who checked this item.

1. ☐	Graphics/printing	9 %
2. ☐	Building trades	26 %
3. ☐	Business education	21 %
4. ☐	Landscaping	11 %
5. ☐	Heating, air conditioning, refrigeration	12 %
6. ☐	Food services	10 %
7. ☐	Mechanics (auto, small engines, diesel)	18 %
8. ☐	Barbering/cosmetology	5 %
9. ☐	Computer/ADP	22 %
10. ☐	Those trades linked to UNICOR (e.g., business education and ADP)	7 %
11. ☐	Vocational training linked to the community	14 %
12. ☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	31 %
13. ☐	None/Don't plan to seek employment	4 %

27. How important or unimportant is participation in UNICOR in helping an inmate get a job upon release? *(Check one.)*

N=1,781

1. ☐	Very important	21 %
2. ☐	Generally important	11 %
3. ☐	Uncertain	14 %
4. ☐	Generally unimportant	6 %
5. ☐	Very unimportant	11 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	37 %

28. If you have any comments on this survey, or on the education and training of prison inmates, please use the space provided below.

Please remember to place your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope, SEAL the envelope, and return it to the education official.

Thank you for your assistance.

GGD/MS/11-91-1

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Survey of Federal Prison Staff

Survey of Federal Prison Correctional Staff on the Education and Training of Inmates

Introduction

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), an independent agency of Congress that evaluates federal programs, is reviewing the educational and vocational training programs for inmates in federal prisons. This questionnaire is part of GAO's review to determine Bureau of Prisons (BOP) inmate enrollment and completion rates, to identify impediments to completion of these programs, and to determine whether vocational training classes are designed to provide inmates with marketable skills.

The questionnaire can be completed in about 20 minutes. Most of the questions can be easily answered by checking boxes or filling in blanks. Space is provided for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. If needed, additional pages may be attached.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed preaddressed envelope within 10 days of receipt. In the event the envelope is misplaced, please mail the completed questionnaire to:

U.S. General Accounting Office
Attn: Ms. Grace Haskins
Room 3126
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

If you have any difficulty in returning the questionnaire promptly or if you have any question, please call Ms. Grace Haskins or Mr. Rich Stana on (202) 566-0026.

* * * * *

I. Background

1. What is your current position? *(Check one.)*

N=552

1.	☐	Supervisor of Education (SOE)	17 %
2.	☐	BOP basic education teacher	40 %
3.	☐	BOP vocational training teacher	17 %
4.	☐	Contract basic education teacher	9 %
5.	☐	Contract vocational training teacher	10 %
		OTHER	8 %

2. How long have you worked in BOP's educational or vocational training programs? *(Round to the nearest year. If less than one year, enter months.)*

_____ (Years) OR _____ (Months)

3. How long have you been employed by BOP? *(Round to the nearest year. If less than one year, enter months.)*

_____ (Years) OR _____ (Months)

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II. Mandatory Requirement

4. To what extent, if any, are the following changes needed to implement BOP's new mandatory literacy requirements? *(Check one box in each row.)*

POSSIBLE CHANGES		Very great extent (1)	Great extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Additional classroom hours	N=504	9 %	15 %	21 %	16 %	30 %	9 %
2. More space	N=530	36 %	28 %	14 %	8 %	7 %	7 %
3. More staff	N=521	26 %	28 %	17 %	11 %	11 %	8 %
4. More funding	N=522	27 %	27 %	19 %	11 %	6 %	9 %
5. More educational material	N=521	18 %	26 %	26 %	14 %	7 %	8 %
6. Make education records more readily available	N=516	11 %	17 %	19 %	17 %	24 %	12 %
7. Shifts in program resources	N=508	6 %	11 %	24 %	20 %	18 %	21 %
8. Other *(Please specify.)*[#] _____	N=49	45 %	4 %	6 %	2 %	0 %	6 %

[#] Thirty-seven percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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II. Incentives

5. How useful, or not, are the following incentives to encourage inmate participation in educational and vocational training classes? *(Check one box in each row.)*

INCENTIVES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. $25.00 cash award for program completion	N=537	33 %	28 %	21 %	11 %	4 %	4 %
2. Pens/dictionaries	N=536	15 %	27 %	26 %	21 %	6 %	5 %
3. Certificates of completion	N=538	28 %	31 %	25 %	12 %	1 %	3 %
4. Graduation photos	N=535	19 %	27 %	21 %	16 %	6 %	11 %
5. Qualifying for the higher paying UNICOR jobs	N=535	39 %	29 %	14 %	7 %	1 %	9 %
6. High quality programs	N=531	35 %	38 %	16 %	4 %	1 %	5 %
7. UNICOR scholarships	N=531	21 %	24 %	16 %	11 %	5 %	23 %
8. Pell grants	N=533	39 %	22 %	12 %	6 %	5 %	16 %
9. Other *(Please specify.)* [#] _____	N=45	60 %	11 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	2 %

[#] Twenty-seven percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

6. If available, how useful or not would each of the following incentives be in increasing an inmate's interest in participating in educational and vocational training classes? *(Check one box in each row.)*

INCENTIVES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Good time (ability to earn reduction in sentence)	N=536	67 %	22 %	5 %	1 %	1 %	3 %
2. Pay grade 4 IPP ($.12/hour) to attend class	N=5[illegible]	31 %	23 %	21 %	12 %	8 %	5 %
3. Credit toward security classification reduction	N=5[illegible]	43 %	27 %	15 %	4 %	2 %	8 %
4. Earn additional visitation hours	N=5[illegible]0	30 %	23 %	22 %	9 %	7 %	9 %
5. Preferred housing or bed assignment	N=527	31 %	29 %	19 %	9 %	6 %	7 %
6. Early release to meals	N=531	26 %	24 %	23 %	14 %	8 %	5 %
7. Attend school as part of 8 hour day rather than on free time	N=531	33 %	30 %	20 %	8 %	5 %	4 %
8. More UNICOR scholarships	N=534	21 %	23 %	19 %	11 %	6 %	21 %
9. Larger UNICOR scholarships	N=531	21 %	23 %	18 %	9 %	6 %	22 %
10. Larger Pell grants	N=535	25 %	25 %	19 %	8 %	6 %	17 %
11. Assurance of employment when released	N=535	49 %	26 %	11 %	3 %	3 %	7 %
12. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____ _____ _____	N=31	42 %	16 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

[1] Forty-two percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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IV. Performance Factors

7. To what extent, if any, are the following indicators useful in measuring program success? *(Check one box in each row.)*

PROGRAM SUCCESS INDICATORS		Very great extent (1)	Great extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Number of completions	N=549	24 %	31 %	25 %	11 %	5 %	3 %
2. Number of inmates on waiting list	N=550	11 %	20 %	26 %	20 %	19 %	5 %
3. Enrollment and attendance in program	N=547	25 %	37 %	23 %	9 %	3 %	3 %
4. Employment upon release	N=546	28 %	26 %	16 %	11 %	6 %	14 %
5. Feedback from inmates	N=547	27 %	38 %	21 %	8 %	3 %	3 %
6. Curriculum design consistent with community standards	N=547	21 %	30 %	24 %	12 %	5 %	8 %
7. Other *(Please specify.)* [#] _____ _____	N=34	32 %	12 %	0 %	0 %	3 %	12 %

[#] **Forty-one percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.**

8. To what extent, if at all, do program reviews assist in identifying program concerns and progress? *(Check one.)*

N=552

1. ☐	Very great extent	11 %
2. ☐	Great extent	29 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	29 %
4. ☐	Some extent	15 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	7 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	11 %

9. How would you rate the reliability of findings identified by program reviews? *(Check one.)*

N=550

1. ☐	Very greatly reliable	6 %
2. ☐	Greatly reliable	30 %
3. ☐	Moderately reliable	32 %
4. ☐	Somewhat reliable	14 %
5. ☐	Little or no reliability	7 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	12 %

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V. Education Data System

10. To what extent, if at all, is the Education Data System (EDS) considered accurate? *(Check one.)*

N=551

1. ☐	Very great extent	7 %
2. ☐	Great extent	29 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	31 %
4. ☐	Some extent	9 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	2 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	23 %

11. To what extent, if at all, does the EDS include duplicative counting (i.e., the inability to differentiate the number of inmates who completed courses from the number of courses completed)? *(Check one.)*

N=544

1. ☐	Very great extent	4 %
2. ☐	Great extent	12 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	27 %
4. ☐	Some extent	15 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	9 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	33 %

12. To what extent, if any, could this data system be improved by the following? *(Check one box in each row.)*

POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS		Very great extent (1)	Great extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. More staff training	N=541	31 %	29 %	16 %	7 %	2 %	16 %
2. Standard guidelines (e.g., completion criteria)	N=537	22 %	30 %	23 %	6 %	3 %	17 %
3. Adding completions by course as well as by program	N=537	18 %	25 %	20 %	9 %	8 %	20 %
4. More focus during program reviews	N=535	8 %	18 %	29 %	17 %	8 %	21 %
5. Task force to review and make recommendations	N=535	14 %	22 %	23 %	13 %	10 %	19 %
6. Adding new data elements	N=533	11 %	17 %	21 %	14 %	13 %	24 %
7. Providing more useful reports	N=534	17 %	24 %	21 %	11 %	6 %	21 %
8. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____ _____	N=40	48 %	8 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	8 %

[1] Thirty-eight percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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13. To what extent, if at all, does the EDS provide the data necessary to help you do you job? *(Check one.)*

N=548

1. ☐	Very great extent	10 %
2. ☐	Great extent	24 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	27 %
4. ☐	Some extent	10 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	10 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	20 %

VI. UNICOR Pay Grades

14. How often, if at all, is consistency between the UNICOR pay grade and high school diploma, or GED, verified? *(Check one.)*

N=551

39 %	1. ☐	Always or almost always	*(Continue to Question 15.)*
24 %	2. ☐	Most of the time	
5 %	3. ☐	About half of the time	
3 %	4. ☐	Some of the time	
2 %	5. ☐	Little or none of the time	*(Skip to Question 16.)*
27 %	6. ☐	No basis to judge	

15. How do you verify compliance with BOP regulations specifying only entry level pay for those inmates who have neither a high school diploma nor a GED? *(Check one.)*

N=374

1. ☐	Compare data in SENTRY with promotion/pay reviews	74 %
2. ☐	Program reviews	10 %
3. ☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	8 %
	Combination 1 and 3	6 %
	Combination 1 and 2	1 %
	Combination 2 and 3	1 %
	Combination 1, 2, and 3	0.5 %

16. To what extent, if any, is the inmate's involvement in the educational program and UNICOR linked/coordinated? *(Check one.)*

N=550

1. ☐	Very great extent	13 %
2. ☐	Great extent	22 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	19 %
4. ☐	Some extent	11 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	15 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	20 %

17. To what extent, if any, should there be a link between the education program and UNICOR? *(Check one.)*

N=552

1. ☐	Very great extent	29 %
2. ☐	Great extent	30 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	18 %
4. ☐	Some extent	5 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	5 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	13 %

18. To what extent, if any, does the half-day work schedule assist in linking the two programs? *(Check one.)*

N=550

1. ☐	Very great extent	16 %
2. ☐	Great extent	22 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	14 %
4. ☐	Some extent	7 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	14 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	28 %

VII. Inmate Withdrawals

19. To what extent, if any, are the following reasons for voluntary inmate withdrawals from educational and vocational training classes? *(Check one box in each row.)*

REASONS FOR INMATE WITHDRAWAL(S)		Very great extent (1)	Great extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Some extent (4)	Little or no extent (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. EDUCATIONAL CLASSES							
1. VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL							
1. Dissatisfied with program	N=532	3 %	7 %	18 %	30 %	34 %	9 %
2. Resent mandatory enrollment	N=531	13 %	19 %	16 %	25 %	15 %	12 %
3. Competition with free time	N=531	14 %	19 %	23 %	20 %	16 %	10 %
4. Gets UNICOR job	N=538	19 %	21 %	18 %	17 %	12 %	15 %
5. Feels no need	N=528	14 %	17 %	23 %	24 %	13 %	10 %
6. Other *(Please specify.)* [1]	N=74	31 %	20 %	16 %	4 %	7 %	22 %
2. INVOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL							
1. Transferred	N=547	36 %	27 %	16 %	11 %	2 %	7 %
2. Released	N=539	25 %	22 %	21 %	19 %	6 %	7 %
3. Disruptive in class	N=533	3 %	3 %	8 %	23 %	53 %	10 %
4. Other *(Please specify.)* [2]	N=30	23 %	7 %	17 %	20 %	0 %	17 %
2. VOCATIONAL TRAINING CLASSES							
1. VOCATIONAL WITHDRAWAL							
1. Dissatisfied with program	N=511	3 %	6 %	11 %	26 %	30 %	24 %
2. Competition with free time	N=508	6 %	11 %	17 %	18 %	22 %	26 %
3. Gets UNICOR job	N=512	18 %	15 %	15 %	13 %	11 %	28 %
4. Feels no need	N=503	5 %	6 %	13 %	18 %	33 %	26 %
5. Other *(Please specify.)* [3]	N=37	27 %	11 %	11 %	14 %	0 %	14 %
2. INVOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL							
1. Transferred	N=518	32 %	21 %	13 %	11 %	3 %	21 %
2. Released	N=511	20 %	19 %	17 %	16 %	6 %	22 %
3. Disruptive in class	N=506	2 %	3 %	8 %	20 %	43 %	25 %
4. Other *(Please specify.)* [4]	N=25	20 %	12 %	12 %	12 %	4 %	16 %

[1] Twenty-two percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

[2] Seventeen percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

[3] Twenty-four percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

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20. Where are withdrawals documented? *(Check all that apply.)*

N=560

1. ☐	EDS	67 %
2. ☐	Inmate's education file	81 %
3. ☐	Other *(Please specify.)* _____	20 %

21. How successful or unsuccessful is the educational (e.g., GED) program in retaining participants through completion? *(Check one.)*

N=552

1. ☐	Very successful	20 %
2. ☐	Generally successful	55 %
3. ☐	Uncertain	10 %
4. ☐	Generally unsuccessful	1 %
5. ☐	Very unsuccessful	0 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	14 %

22. How successful or unsuccessful is the vocational program in retaining participants through completion? *(Check one.)*

N=548

1. ☐	Very successful	24 %
2. ☐	Generally successful	43 %
3. ☐	Uncertain	10 %
4. ☐	Generally unsuccessful	2 %
5. ☐	Very unsuccessful	0 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	22 %

VIII. Preparation for Release

23. Do you think the educational training classes inmates have attended will assist them in getting jobs upon release? *(Check one.)*

N=555

1. ☐	Definitely yes	26 %
2. ☐	Probably yes	45 %
3. ☐	Uncertain	19 %
4. ☐	Probably no	5 %
5. ☐	Definitely no	1 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	5 %

24. Do you think the vocational training classes inmates have attended will assist them in getting jobs upon release? *(Check one.)*

N=553

1. ☐	Definitely yes	33 %
2. ☐	Probably yes	43 %
3. ☐	Uncertain	11 %
4. ☐	Probably no	2 %
5. ☐	Definitely no	1 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	10 %

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25. How useful or not is each of the following vocational training classes in helping an inmate get a job upon release? *(Check one box in each row.)*

VOCATIONAL TRAINING CLASSES		Very greatly useful (1)	Greatly useful (2)	Moderately useful (3)	Somewhat useful (4)	Of little or no usefulness (5)	No basis to judge (6)
1. Graphics/printing	N=529	13 %	20 %	18 %	9 %	1 %	40 %
2. Building trades	N=532	22 %	30 %	16 %	4 %	0 %	27 %
3. Business education	N=531	16 %	29 %	21 %	7 %	3 %	24 %
4. Landscaping	N=531	14 %	22 %	20 %	12 %	3 %	30 %
5. Heating, air conditioning, refrigeration	N=534	24 %	32 %	12 %	3 %	1 %	28 %
6. Food services	N=535	17 %	25 %	18 %	10 %	2 %	28 %
7. Mechanics (auto, small engine, diesel)	N=535	21 %	24 %	16 %	6 %	1 %	32 %
8. Barbering/cosmetology	N=531	14 %	22 %	20 %	8 %	3 %	35 %
9. Computer/ADP	N=528	23 %	26 %	13 %	9 %	3 %	27 %
10. Those classes linked to UNICOR (e.g., business education and UNICOR ADP)	N=525	10 %	22 %	17 %	11 %	3 %	38 %
11. Vocational training linked to the community	N=527	21 %	25 %	11 %	4 %	2 %	37 %
12. Other *(Please specify.)* [1] _____ _____	N=58	57 %	14 %	5 %	3 %	7 %	14 %

[1] Fourteen percent of the staff responding to this question provided an answer but did not rate it.

26. To what extent, if any, should BOP assist inmates in finding employment once they are released? *(Check one.)*

N=550

1. ☐ Very great extent 22 %
2. ☐ Great extent 31 %
3. ☐ Moderate extent 22 %
4. ☐ Some extent 14 %
5. ☐ Little or no extent 12 %

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27. How effective or ineffective is your prerelease program in preparing inmates for reentry into the community? *(Check one.)*

N=548

1. ☐	Very effective	5 %
2. ☐	Generally effective	34 %
3. ☐	Neither effective nor ineffective	15 %
4. ☐	Generally ineffective	8 %
5. ☐	Very ineffective	3 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	35 %

28. To what extent, if any, has your facility involved the community (for example, the persons from ex-offender employment programs) in the development and implementation of your prerelease program? *(Check one.)*

N=547

1. ☐	Very great extent	10 %
2. ☐	Great extent	20 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	16 %
4. ☐	Some extent	10 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	11 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	34 %

29. To what extent, if any, should your facility involve community organizations in the development and implementation of prerelease programs? *(Check one.)*

N=546

1. ☐	Very great extent	25 %
2. ☐	Great extent	33 %
3. ☐	Moderate extent	15 %
4. ☐	Some extent	8 %
5. ☐	Little or no extent	3 %
6. ☐	No basis to judge	17 %

IX. Comments

30. If you have any comments on this survey, or on the education and training of prison inmates, please use the space provided below or attach an additional sheet.

Thank you for helping in this study.

GGD/HSA-92

Comments From the Federal Bureau of Prisons

U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Prisons

Office of the Director *Washington, DC 20534*

December 1, 1992

Harold A. Valentine, Associate Director
Administration of Justice Issues
United States General Accounting Office
Room 200
820 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Valentine:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report: Federal Prisons Inmate and Staff Views on Education and Work Training Programs.

The GAO recommendation that the Attorney General require the Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) Director to explore broadening the incentives used to promote inmate participation in and completion of education and vocational training programs is consistent with the future directions envisioned by the BOP. The specific incentives identified such as preferred housing assignments, custody level reductions, and school attendance during the regular work day will be given serious consideration as new incentives are examined.

We, too, are concerned that staff only grant pay raises to non-exempt inmates who have met the BOP literacy requirement. To address this issue, staff from our Program Review Division, the section which conducts our internal reviews of Bureau programs, will continue to verify that this requirement is being met.

I want to acknowledge the careful attention to detail reflected in this report and to express appreciation for the information and recommendations it contains.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Kane for

J. Michael Quinlan
Director

Major Contributors to This Report

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